MODULE 1.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD OF COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY.

- **Upon successful completion of this module you will be able to:**
  - Discuss the differences between prevention and treatment.
  - Differentiate interventions that bring about short term versus long term changes.
  - Recognize the many layers of community interventions.
  - Identify critical elements of the Community Psychology approach.

- **Introduction to Community Psychology.**
- Most people think of psychologists in very traditional ways. For example, if you were to close your eyes and imagine a psychologist, there is a good chance you would think of a clinician or therapist. Clinical psychologists in their office settings often treat people with psychological problems one at a time by trying to change thought patterns, perceptions, or behaviour.

This is often called the "MEDICAL MODEL" which involves a therapist delivering one-on-one psychotherapy to patients.

TRADITIONAL TREATMENT MODELS IN MENTAL HEALTH.

- The Medical model incorporates the basic assumptions of medicine and approaches to the treatment of mental disorders the same as a physical injury.
  - Focus is on the individual.
- An example of medical mode would be a clinician delivering one-on-one therapy to influence a patient's thought patterns, perception and behaviour.

- **Strength-Based Approach or Model.**
- This course teaches you about a different approach rather than the medical model, called the **strength-based approach**, called **Community Psychology**.
- Community **Psychology** is a field that goes beyond an individual focus and integrates social, cultural, economic, political, environmental, and international influences to promote positive change, health, and empowerment at individual and systemic levels (SCRA27.org).

- Focus goes beyond the individual.
- Builds competencies and skills, rather than fixing deficits.

FOUNDATIONS OF COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY.

(A MOST FAMOUS SOFA: SIGMUND FREUD'S SOFA - For Reference see Resources. See Image in Image File.)

- During the 1960s many psychologists wanted to find ways to help solve the pressing societal issues at the time rising the civil rights movement and the Vietnam war.
  - In 1965 a Conference in the US was organized to address and look at these societal issues, it was at this Swampscott conference that the term **Community Psychology** was first used.
  - The conference was held because the medical model was not inclusive enough, and the need for additional avenues to address the pressing societal issues.
  - The result of the conference was new roles and opportunities to expand services to groups who are under-represented.

- The field of Community Psychology has matured with recurring themes of **prevention**, **social justice**, and an **ecological** understanding of people within their environments.

The goals of Community Psychology have been to examine and better understand complex individual–environment interactions to bring about social change, particularly for those who have limited resources and opportunities.

• The Role of Prevention.

(Adapted from Photo by geralt is licensed under the Pixabay License. See photo in Image File.)

- One of the primary characteristics of the Community Psychology field is its focus on preventing rather than just treating psychological problems.
  - The preventive perspective involves the identification of the root of a problem and working with community members.
  - **Prevention** are actions aimed to stop social issues/problems from happening.
  - With prevention there are two radically different ways of helping others, which are referred to as **first-order** and **second-order** change.

• The Role of Prevention First-Order Change.

- First-Order change attempts to eliminate deficits and problems by focusing exclusively on the individuals.
  - Involves minor changes that lead to small, short term improvements.
  - Any type of direct intervention with an individual.
  - Does not influence the environment (or context).
  - The roots of the cause of the problem are not structurally changed.

• The Role of Prevention: Second-Order Change.

- Second-Order change attempts to eliminate defects with more structural, or environmental changes, getting at the root/source of the problem.
  - Involves structural, long term, and sustainable transformational changes.
  - Changes tend to persist over time in preventing societal problems.
  - Goes beyond the individual.

• First and Second Order Example.

• Imagine a beautiful lake with a long sandy beach surrounded by high cliffs. You notice a person who fell from one of the cliffs and who is now flailing about in the water. The lifeguard jumps in the water to save him. But then a bit later, another person wades too far into the water and panics as he does not know how to swim, and the lifeguard again dives into the water to save him. This pattern continues day after day, and the lifeguard recognizes that she cannot successfully rescue every person that falls into the water or wades in too deep.

The lifeguard thinks that a solution would be to install railings to prevent people from falling from the cliffs and to teach the others on the beach how to swim. The lifeguard then attempts to persuade local officials of the need for railings and swimming lessons. During months of meetings with town officials, several powerful leaders are hesitant about spending the money to fund the needed changes. But the lifeguard is persistent and finally convinces them that scrambling to save someone only after they start to drown is dangerous, and the town officials budget the money to install railings on the cliffs and initiate swimming classes.

- The first paragraph above highlights **first-order change**, the lifeguard saving one person at a time is focusing on individuals.
- The second paragraph shows **second-order change**, as getting to the source of the problem and implementing changes, to place railings on the dangerous cliff, and making sure people can swim.

- **The Role of Prevention.**
- There is a considerable appeal for a preventive approach, particularly as George Albee (1986) has shown that no condition or disease has ever been eliminated by focusing just on those with the problem.
- Prevention is also strongly endorsed by those in medicine who have been trained in the Public Health model, where services are provided to groups of people at risk for a disease or disorder in order to prevent them from developing it.
- Public Health practitioners seek to prevent medical problems in large groups of individuals through, for example, immunizations or finding and eliminating the environmental sources of disease outbreaks.
- Community Psychology has adopted this preventive Public Health approach in its efforts to Analyze social problems, in addition to its unique characteristics.
- Read a case study on the next page to learn about a real-world example of prevention, second-order change, that involves reducing tobacco use.

- **Case Study 1.1: Youth Tobacco Prevention.**
- •In the 1980s, school students informed community psychologist Leonard Jason that store merchants were openly selling them cigarettes. The students' critical input was used to launch a study assessing illegal commercial sales of tobacco, and Jason's team found that 80% of stores in the Chicago metropolitan area sold cigarettes to minors.
- When results of this study were publicized on the evening television news, Officer Bruce Talbot from the suburban town of Woodridge, Illinois contacted Jason to express interest in working on this community problem. Talbot and the Woodridge police with technical help from Jason's team collected data showing that most Woodridge merchants sold

tobacco to minors. With these data, Woodridge passed legislation that fined both vendors caught illegally selling tobacco and minors found in possession of tobacco.

- Two years after implementing this program, rates of stores selling to minors decreased from an average of 70% to less than 5%. Woodridge was the first city in the US to demonstrate that cigarette smoking could be effectively decreased through legislation and enforcement. Jason later testified at the tobacco settlement hearings at the House Commerce Subcommittee on Health and Environment.

- Due to this study, Officer Talbot had become a national authority on illegal sales of cigarettes to minors. Talbot advised communities throughout the country on how to establish effective laws to reduce youth access to tobacco, and he testified at congressional hearings in Washington D.C. in support of the Synar Amendment, which required states to reduce illegal sales of tobacco to minors using similar methods to those developed in Woodridge. Due to the enactment of the Synar Amendment, there has been a 21% nationwide decrease in the odds of tenth graders becoming daily smokers (Jason, 2013).

• A Social Justices Orientation.
(Figure 1. From Federal Reserve Bulletin, September 2017 Survey of Consumer Finances. See Image in Image File.)

• Community Psychology's focus on social justice is due to the recognition that many of our social problems are perpetuated when resources are disproportionately allocated throughout our society.

A Social Justice orientation is one that aims to assist people and groups who have historically been marginalized and oppressed.

Community Psychology endorses a social justice and critical psychology perspective which looks at how oppressive social systems preserve classism, sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination and domination that perpetuate social injustice (Kagan, 2011).

- • Social **Justice** is the fair distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges that provide equal opportunities for education, healthcare, work, and housing.
- **Social Change** refers to any alteration in behaviours or norms.
- • **A Social Justice Example.**
- • The need for social justice orientation is evident when working with urban schools that are dealing with a lack of resources, overcrowded classrooms, community gang activity, and violence.
- Traditional mental health services such as therapy that deals with a student's mental health issues would not address the income resource inequalities and stressful environmental factors that could be causing children's mental health difficulties.
- Second-order change strategies, in contrast, would address the systems and structures causing the problems and might involve collaborative partnerships to bring more resources to the school as well as support community-based efforts to reduce gang activity and violence.
- • **Social Justice, Cont'd.**

- - The social justice perspective can also be used to examine the institutionalization of millions of individuals in the US criminal justice system.
- According to an individualistic perspective, people end up in prison because of factors such as mental illness, substance abuse, or a history of domestic violence. On the other hand, the Community Psychology social justice perspective posits that larger, structural forces (e.g., political, cultural, environmental, etc) need to be considered.
- A social justice perspective recognizes that millions of people have been locked up in US prisons due to more restrictive and punishing laws (such as mandatory minimums, and three-strikes which requires lifetime prison sentences), and there have been changes in how we have also dealt with patients in mental institutions.

- **Social Justice, Cont'd.**
(Figure 2. "World prison population 2008" by Jannick88 is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. See Image in Image File.)
- **Case Study 1.2: A Chance for Change through Oxford House.**
- "I was born to an addicted mother who was a heroin addict and meth user as well. She left when I was 2 and I have only seen my mother one time when I was 17. I was adopted by my grandparents and was raised in a great family. I grew up having the best things in life and I was a standout sports player in high school until my life took a turn – for the worst. I dabbled with drugs and, after an injury that caused me to never play again, I turned to drugs. I became addicted to cocaine and meth and painkillers.

Thinking I had it all under control, I caught my first felony and was sent to prison at 19. I became a prison gang member and later was a gang leader of one of the most dangerous and second-largest gangs in the United States prison system. Once released after two years, I got out and did not know how to readjust to living normal. I started using Heroin and my life and addiction became the worst. Nineteen days later I was charged with an organized crime case and after bonding out, I went to treatment but never took it seriously. I was just addicted to the money and power I possessed and, no matter how much my family begged me to just stop, I went back to shooting dope… I was given a 7-year sentence and I served six and a half years at the deadly Ferguson unit here in Texas.

Five years of that I spent in solitary confinement, locked down 23 hours a day due to my gang affiliations and actions in prison where I continued to use drugs and was just as much strung out as if I was still in the world. In 2013, I was paroled back home. I only lasted five months and was indicted on 2 first-degree felonies and offered 80 years. I went to jury trial where I was found not guilty but ended up with another indictment that I signed a five-year sentence for. I did four years, eight months, on that charge and was released back home in 2018.

I lasted 2 days until I relapsed once again [on] heroin and on July 24, I did the last shot of heroin I will ever do. I overdosed and died in the ambulance only to be brought back and I woke up in Red River Detox, beat down and broken. I was there when I saw Philip and Cristen came to do a presentation. As I listened to Philip tell his story, I saw myself in him and realized that this is what I want. I wanted to finally make it and live a real life so I got into Oxford House where I'm sober today, working have my family back in my life and holding my head up high each day because I can stand to look at the man in the mirror. I owe this to Oxford Chapter 14; they have

saved my life and now I am Re-Entry coordinator and have a chance to help people like me get a chance of making it. Thank you, Oxford House" (Oxford House Commemorative Program, 2018, page 57).

- **Social Justice**
- The case study from the previous slide shows that the social justice needs for individuals coming out of prison include community-based programs that provide stable housing, new connections in terms of friends, and opportunities to earn money from legal sources. Oxford House, which is mentioned in this case study, is a community-based innovation for re-integrating people back into the community.

Oxford Houses represent the types of promising social and community grassroots efforts that can offer people coming out of prisons and substance abuse treatment programs a chance to live in an environment where everyone is working, not using drugs, and behaving responsibly.

There are these types of innovative grassroots organizations throughout our communities, and community psychologists have key roles to play in helping to document the outcomes of these true incubators of social innovation.

- **A Shift in Perspective: The Ecological Model.**
- *Figure 3. "Shift in Perspective" by Olya Glantsman. (see Images File).*
- An aspect of Community Psychology that sets it apart from a more traditional Clinical Psychology is a shift beyond an **individualistic perspective.**

Community psychologists consider how individuals, communities, and societies are interconnected, rather than focusing solely on the individual.

As a result, the context or environment is considered an integral part when trying to understand and work with communities and individuals embedded in them.

This shift in thinking is referred to as an ecological perspective. Ecological means that there are multiple levels or layers of issues that need to be considered, including the individual, family, neighbourhood, community, and policies at the national level.

- **Levels of Influence in The Ecological Model.**
    1. Individual Level
    2. Interpersonal Level
    3. Organizational Level
    4. Community Level
    5. Societal Level
- In addition to thinking about these multiple ecological levels, the community psychologist James Kelly (2006) has proposed several useful principles that help us better understand how social environments affect people.

For example, the ecological principle of "interdependence" indicates that everything is connected, so changing one aspect of a setting or environment will have many ripple effects.

For example, if you provide those released from prison a safe place to live with others who are gainfully employed (as occurs in Oxford Houses), this setting can then lead to positive behaviour changes.

- **Ecological Principle: Adaptation.**
- The ecological principle of "adaptation" indicates that behaviour adaptive in one setting may not be adaptive in other settings.

A person who was highly skilled at selling drugs and stealing will find that these behaviours are not adaptive or successful in a sober living house, so the person will have to learn new interpersonal skills that are adaptive in this recovery setting.

The ecological perspective broadens the focus beyond individuals to include their context or environment, by requiring us to think about how organizations, neighbourhoods, communities, and societies are structured as systems.

This ecological perspective helps us move beyond an individualistic orientation for understanding many of our significant social problems such as homelessness, which in the US affects over a half a million people (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2018).

At the individual level, many of these individuals do suffer from substance abuse and mental health problems, and they often cycle in and out of the criminal justice system. However, the ecological perspective would focus attention on the lack of affordable housing for low-income people, and thus call for higher-order interventions that go beyond the individual.

- **Case Study 1.3: Pathways to Housing: Russell's Story.**
- "Russell grew up in Southeast DC before becoming homeless more than three decades ago. Struggling with schizophrenia, Russell was in and out of jail and the hospital. He spent the last ten years sleeping on a park bench downtown.

This fall, with the help of his Pathways team, Russell moved off the streets and into a permanent apartment. For the first time since 1980, Russell finally has a roof over his head and a place to call home. His favorite thing about the new space? "The television." A die-hard Washington Redskins fan, Russell is thrilled to be able to cheer his team on—hopefully all the way to the Super Bowl—from the comfort of his living room.

For Russell though, it is more than just watching his favorite team play. After just two months, Russell is beginning to thrive in his new home. He has accomplished several personal goals including saving to buy a new bike (Russell is a former DC courier) and attending his first-ever Nationals game. Because of you, Russell will not be out in the cold this winter" (Pathways to Housing: Russell's Story).

- **The Ecological Perspective.**
- The ecological perspective provides an opportunity to examine the issues associated with homelessness beyond the individual level of analysis. Through this framework, we can understand homelessness within complicated personal, organizational, and community systems.

This ecologic perspective can also be applied to more preventive interventions, such as when Thompson and Jason (1988) stopped gang recruitment by providing urban youth anti-gang classroom sessions and after-school activities that consisted of organized sports clinics that encouraged intragroup cooperation as well as opportunities to travel out of their neighbourhood to participate in events and activities with similar groups from other locations.

However, those only provided the person-cantered anti-gang classroom sessions were still vulnerable to being recruited by gangs after school.

There are many examples of how a multi-scale, ecological systems model of people environment transactions can broaden our understanding of societal problems (Stokols, 2018).

- **Other Key Principles of Community Psychology.**
- There are several key features in the field of community Psychology, this topic will review them.

- **Respect for Diversity.**
- Community Psychology has a **respect for diversity and appreciates the views** and norms of groups from different ethnic or racial backgrounds, as well as those of different genders, sexual orientations, and levels of abilities or disabilities.

Community psychologists work to counter oppression that is due to racism (white persons have access to resources and opportunities not available to ethnic minorities), sexism (discrimination directed at women), heterosexist (discrimination toward no-heterosexuals), and ableism (discrimination toward those with physical or mental disabilities).

The task of creating a more equitable society should not fall on the shoulders of those who have directly experienced its inequalities, including ethnic minorities, the disabled, and other underprivileged populations.

Being sensitive to issues of diversity is critical in designing interventions, and if preventive interventions are culturally tailored to meet the diverse needs of the recipients, they are more likely to be appreciated, valued, and maintained over time.

- **Active Citizen Participation**
- Paulo Freire (1970) wrote that change efforts begin by helping people identify the issues they have strong feelings about, and that community members should be part of the search for solutions through **active citizen participation.**

Involving community groups and community members in an egalitarian partnership is one means of enabling people to re-establish power and control over the obstacles or barriers they confront.

When our community partners are recognized as experts, they can advocate for themselves as well as for others, as indicated in Case Study 1.1 that described how Officer Talbot became an activist for reducing youth access to tobacco.

Individuals build valuable skills when they help define issues, provide solutions, and have a voice in decisions that ultimately affect them and their community.

This Community Psychology approach shifts the power dynamic to a less hierarchical, more equal relationship, as all parties participate in the decision-making.

Community members are resources who provide unique points of view about the community and the institutional barriers that might need to be overcome in social justice interventions.

All partners are involved equally in the research process in what is called **community-based participatory research.**

- **Grounding in Research and Evaluation.**
- In striving to understand the relationship between social systems and individual well-being, community psychologist's base advocacy and social change on data that are generated from research and apply a number of **evaluation tools** to conceptualize and understand these complex ecological issues.

Community psychologists believe that it is important to evaluate whether their policy and social change preventive interventions have been successful in meeting their objectives, and the voice of the community should be brought into these evaluation efforts.

They conduct community-based **action-oriented research** and often employ multiple methods including what are called **qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research** (Jason & Glenwick, 2016). No one method is superior to another, and what is needed is a match between the research methods and the nature of the questions asked by the community members and researchers.

Community psychologists, like Durlak and Pachan (2012), have used adventuresome research methods to investigate the effects of hundreds of programs dedicated to preventing mental health problems in children and adolescents, and the findings showed positive outcomes in terms of improved competence, adjustment, and reduced problems.

- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration.**
- Social issues are complex and intertwined throughout every fibre of our society, as pointed out by the ecological perspective. When working with individuals who have been marginalized and oppressed, it is important to recognize that issues such as addiction and homelessness require expertise from many perspectives.
Community Psychology promotes **interdisciplinary collaboration** with professionals from a diverse array of fields.

For example, a community psychologist helped put together the multidisciplinary team evaluating Oxford House efforts to help re-integrate individuals with substance use problems back into the community.

One member of the team was a sociologist who studies social networks, and one of the important findings was that the best predictor of positive long-term outcomes was having at least one friend in the recovery houses.

Also, part of this team was an economist who found that the economic benefits were greater, and costs were less for this Oxford House community intervention than an intervention delivered by professionals.

Other important contributions were made by a social worker, a Public Health researcher, Oxford House members, and undergraduate and graduate students who each contributed unique skills and valuable perspectives to the research team.

You can see how these types of collaborations can emerge, with different disciplines working together to create new ideas and advance knowledge across fields.

- **Sense of Community.**
- One of the core values of Community Psychology is the key role of psychological **sense of community**, which describes our need for **a supportive network of people on which we can depend**.

Promoting a healthy sense of community is one of the overarching goals of Community Psychology, as a loss of connectedness lies at the root of many of our social problems.

So, understanding how to promote a sense of belonging, interdependence, and mutual commitment is integral to achieving second-order change.

If people feel that they exist within a larger interdependent network, they are more willing to commit to and even make personal sacrifices for that group to bring about long-term social changes.

From a Community Psychology perspective, an intervention would be considered unsuccessful if it increased students' achievement test scores but fostered competition and rivalry that damaged their sense of community.

- **Empowerment.**
Photo by Miguel Bruna is licensed under the Unsplashed License. (See Images File.)
- Another important feature of Community Psychology is empowerment, defined as the process by which people and communities who have historically not had control over their lives become masters of their own fate.

People and communities who are empowered have greater autonomy and self-determination, gain more access to resources, participate in community decision-making, and begin to work toward changing oppressive community and societal conditions.

As shown in Case Study 1.3, individuals such as Russell who have been homeless often feel a lack of control over their lives.

However, once provided stable housing and connections with others, they feel more empowered and able to gain the needed resources to improve the quality of their lives.

- **Policy.**

• Community psychologists also enter the policy arena by trying to influence laws and regulations, as illustrated by the work on reducing minors' access to tobacco described in Case Study 1.1.

Community psychologists have made valuable contributions at local, state, national, and international levels by collaborating with community-based organizations and serving as senior policy advisors.

It is through policy work that over the last century, the length of the human lifespan has doubled, poverty has dropped by over 50%, and child and infant mortality rates have been reduced by 90%.

Over the next decades, there is a need for policy-level interventions to help overcome dilemmas such as escalating population growth, growing inequalities between the highest and lowest compensated workers, increasing temperatures due to the burning of fossil fuels, and the expanding needs of our growing elderly population.

The principles of **Community Psychology** that have been successfully used to change policy at the local and community level **might also be employed to deal** with these **more global issues that are impacting us now, and will increasingly do so in the future.**

• **Promoting Wellness.**
(Image 4: "Outdoor Seminar Group" by Gerhard Lipold is licensed under CC0 1.0. See Image in Image File.)

• The promotion of **wellness** is another feature of Community Psychology.

Wellness is not simply the stereotypical lack of illness, but rather the combination of physical, psychological, and social health, including attainment of personal goals and well-being.

Furthermore, Community Psychology applies this concept to also include groups of people, and communities—in a sense, **collective wellness.**

• THE KEY POINTS FROM THIS MODULE ARE:

• Community Psychology is a field that goes beyond an individual focus and integrates social, cultural, economic, political, environmental, and international influences to promote positive change, health, and empowerment at individual and systemic levels.

It was at the 1965 Swampscott conference in the USA that the term Community Psychology.

The field of Community Psychology has matured with recurring themes of **prevention**, **social justice**, and an **ecological** understanding of people within their environments.

The goals of Community Psychology have been to examine and better understand complex individual–environment interactions to bring about social change, particularly for those who have limited resources and opportunities.

One of the primary characteristics of the Community Psychology field is its focus on preventing rather than just treating psychological problems.

First-Order change attempts to eliminate deficits and problems by focusing exclusively on the individuals.

Second-Order change attempts to eliminate defects with more structural, or environmental changes, getting at the root/source of the problem.

Public Health practitioners seek to prevent medical problems in large groups of individuals through, for example, immunizations or finding and eliminating the environmental sources of disease outbreaks.

Community Psychology has adopted this preventive Public Health approach in its efforts to analyze social problems, in addition to its unique characteristics.

A Social Justice orientation is one that aims to assist people and groups who have historically been marginalized and oppressed.

Social Justice is the fair distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges that provide equal opportunities for education, healthcare, work, and housing.

Social Change refers to any alteration in behaviours or norms.

An aspect of Community Psychology that sets it apart from a more traditional Clinical Psychology is a shift beyond an **individualistic perspective.**

Ecological means that there are multiple levels or layers of issues that need to be considered, including the individual, family, neighbourhood, community, and policies at the national level.

- **Levels of Influence in The Ecological Model.**
    - Individual Level.
    - Interpersonal Level.
    - Organizational Level.
    - Community Level.
    - Societal Level.

    - **Respect for Diversity:** Community Psychology has a respect for diversity and appreciates the views and norms of groups from different ethnic or racial backgrounds, as well as those of different genders, sexual orientations, and levels of abilities or disabilities.
    - **Active Citizen Participation:** Involving community groups and community members in an egalitarian partnership is one means of enabling people to re-establish power and control over the obstacles or barriers they confront.
    - **Grounding in Research and Evaluation:** Community psychologists believe that it is important to evaluate whether their policy and social change preventive interventions have been successful in meeting their objectives, and the voice of the community should be brought into these evaluation efforts.
    - **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Social issues are complex and intertwined throughout every fibre of our society, as pointed out by the ecological perspective, as such they require expertise from many perspectives.
    - **Sense of Community:** Describes our need for a supportive network of people on which we can depend.

- **Empowerment:** Defined as the process by which people and communities who have historically not had control over their lives become masters of their own fate
- **Policy:** Community psychologists also enter the policy arena by trying to influence laws and regulations.
- **Promoting Wellness:** Wellness is not simply the stereotypical lack of illness, but rather the combination of physical, psychological, and social health, including attainment of personal goals and well-being.